



# American Citizen Services News

## *Don't forget to vote!*

### Request your absentee ballot in time for election day

Voting for overseas citizens is easier now than ever before. More than half the States post absentee ballots online for overseas voters. Additionally, voters from all 55 states and territories can use the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) online Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot automated assistant to vote for at least all federal candidates.

For specifics of what each of these states has available including links to the state specific sites, see the Electronic Voting Systems Fact Sheet on Page 2.

In 2009, President Obama signed the Military and Overseas Voters Empowerment Act (MOVE Act) into

law. MOVE Act requires all states to provide blank absentee ballots in at least one electronic format – email, an online ballot delivery system or fax – at least 45 days before an election.

To jump-start the electronic voting support process for overseas voters, FVAP offered the federally funded Electronic Voting Support Wizard (EVSU).

This system develops State-designed and operated absentee ballot delivery websites, accessible through FVAP.gov,

that allow voters to mark their precinct-specific absentee ballots, and then print, sign and submit by the methods allowed (mail, email, fax or online delivery system).

In addition to EVSU, other States produced their own online ballot marking systems. As these systems vary by state, refer to the Electronic Voting Systems Fact Sheet (again, on Page 2 of this newsletter) for specifics.

Finally, FVAP produced the online Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot automated assistant which allows voters to access and mark an online ballot for federal elections. This is a back-up ballot if the voter does not get their regular State absentee ballot, where the voter

### Consular outreach to Aleppo

*Consular officers will be at the ICARDA school in Aleppo on October 19th to provide American Citizen Services and accept petitions for immigrant visas. Services will be provided between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. The ICARDA school is located in A'Zamieh, behind the Presidential Palace.*

can select their candidates online, print the ballot with the choices printed out on the ballot, sign the oath and return the ballot package by whatever means is allowed by the state (mail, email, fax or online system).

The automated assistant provides voters a complete federal ballot specific by Congressional district with all instructions necessary to return the ballot to the election office.

In the end, the voter gets more time to review, mark, and return their ballot by the State deadlines. Being stationed or living away from home means it takes longer for ballots to get to and from voters.

Past research shows late delivery of ballots is a top reason why absentee ballots from overseas voters are not counted.

The combination of these systems and early ballot availability means that voters can have their ballot in hand to vote and return 45 days or longer before an election.

Additional information:

For more information, visit FVAP at: [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).



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# States with electronic voting

The following state websites allow voters to either mark their state ballot online or print a blank ballot for marking.

## Alabama

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, Alabama offers a state system which facilitates the use of the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link – [https://www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/AL\\_login.action](https://www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/AL_login.action)
- Voters must return the ballot by mail

## Arizona

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, Arizona offers a state system which allows ballot delivery to the voter and return of the voted ballot to the election official
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link: <https://www.azsos.gov/election/military/default.aspx>
- Voters may return voted ballots to local election officials via mail, email, fax or uploaded through the state system

## Colorado

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, 4 counties (and expanding) have a site which allow voters to access the ballot for marking and printing. It is accessible through FVAP.gov, and the state-specific link for Gilpen, Morgan, Park and Weld Counties: <https://move.liveballot.com/uocava/default.aspx>
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, county-specific link for El Paso County: <https://elpasocounty2010general.com>
- Military and dependent voters are allowed to return voted ballots to local election officials via email, fax and mail.
- All other voters are allowed to return voted ballots to local election officials by mail or fax.

## Delaware

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, all counties are participating.

## Don't see your state here?

Regardless of whether your state permits electronic voting, you can still vote absentee. Please visit the following web sites for more information:

- Federal Voting Assistance Program: <http://www.fvap.gov/>
- National Voter Registration form: [http://www.eac.gov/files/voter/nvra\\_update.pdf](http://www.eac.gov/files/voter/nvra_update.pdf)
- U.S. Election Assistance Commission: <http://www.eac.gov>
- Overseas Vote Foundation: <https://www.overseasvotefoundation.org/>

Please also keep in mind that the Embassy can help in mailing absentee ballot requests and ballots back to your home state. Once you have completed any necessary voting materials that need to be mailed to your home state, you may schedule a [“notarial and other” appointment](#) in the American Citizen Services section of the Embassy. We can receive the materials and mail them for you. Please allow at least two weeks ahead of election day, November 4.

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link: <https://move.liveballot.com/uocava/default.aspx>
- Voters may return the voted ballot via mail, email or fax

## Georgia

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, Georgia offers registered voters who requested electronic delivery of the ballot a system to access the ballot online
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link: <http://www.sos.georgia.gov/MVP/Login.aspx>
- Voted ballots must be returned by mail.

## Idaho

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, all counties are participating
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link: <https://move.liveballot.com/uocava/default.aspx>
- In certain emergency situations, Idaho may allow you to return your voted ballot by email or fax. All other voted ballots must be returned by mail.

**Illinois**

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, Illinois offers voters an online system for accessing the ballot
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link: <https://move.elections.il.gov>
- Voted ballots must be returned by mail.

**Indiana**

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, all counties are participating.
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link – [www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/IN\\_login.action](http://www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/IN_login.action)
- Voters may return the voted ballot by mail, email or fax.

**Kentucky**

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, Kentucky offers voters an online system for accessing the ballot
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific website – <https://kentucky.overseasvotefoundation.org/overseas/home.htm>
- Voted ballots must be returned by mail.

**Maine**

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, Maine allows voters to access the ballot online
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific website – <http://www.maine.gov/cgi-bin/online/AbsenteeBallot/index.pl>
- In certain emergency or combat situations, voter may submit the voted ballot by fax or as an attachment by email. Voters not in emergency or combat situations must return the voted ballot by mail.

**Maryland**

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, Maryland offers registered voters who requested electronic delivery of the ballot a system to access the ballot
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific website – <http://www.mdelections.org/>
- Voters must return ballots by mail.

**Minnesota**

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, Minnesota offers voters a system to access the ballot online
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific website – <https://minnesota.overseasvotefoundation.org/overseas/home.htm>
- Voters must return voted ballots by mail.

**Mississippi**

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, all counties are participating.
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link – [www.secureballotusa.com](http://www.secureballotusa.com)
- Voters may return the voted ballot by mail, email or fax.

**Missouri**

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, one county, Boone is participating.
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link – [www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/MO\\_login.action](http://www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/MO_login.action)
- Most voters are required to return their physical ballot by mail. If you are a military voter serving in a hostile fire area such as Iraq, Afghanistan, or Kosovo, you may return your voted ballot by mail, email or fax.

**Montana**

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, all counties are participating.
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link – <https://vote4montana.us/Register.aspx>
- Voters may return the voted ballot by mail, email or fax.

**Nebraska**

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, all counties are participating.
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link – [https://www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/NE\\_login.action](https://www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/NE_login.action)
- Voters must return the voted ballot by mail.

### New Mexico

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, two counties: Curry and Travis are participating.
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link – [https://www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/NM\\_login.action](https://www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/NM_login.action)
- Voters are allowed to return the voted ballot by mail, email or fax.

### Nevada

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, 11 counties are participating.
- 10 counties: Elko, Esmeralda, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Lincoln, Nye, Pershing, Storey, and White Pine
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link – [vote4nevada.us](http://vote4nevada.us)
- Voters are allowed to return the voted ballot by mail, email or fax.

### New York

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, all counties are participating
- state-specific link – [https://secureballotusa.com/diaspora\\_ny/NY\\_login.action](https://secureballotusa.com/diaspora_ny/NY_login.action)
- Voters must return the voted ballot by mail.

### Pennsylvania

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, Pennsylvania offers a state system which allows voters to access the blank and return ballot online
- state specific link: <https://www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us/Pages/Login.aspx>
- Voters must return the voted ballot by mail.

### Rhode Island

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, Rhode Island offers voters a system to access the ballot online
- state-specific website – <http://www.sos.ri.gov/vic>
- Voters are allowed to return the voted ballot by mail, email or fax

### Texas

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, Texas offers a state system which allows online ballot marking and printing by the voter
- state specific link: <https://texas.overseasvotefoundation.org/overseas/home.htm>
- The site only covers federal elections
- Completed ballots must be returned by mail

### Utah

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, 11 counties are participating.
- 11 counties: Beaver, Box Elder, Cache, Davis, Kane, Salt Lake, Sanpete, Summit, Tooele, Washington, and Weber
- state-specific link – <https://utah.everyonecounts.com>
- Voters are allowed to return the voted ballot by mail, email or fax

### Washington

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, one county, Yakima is participating.
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, state-specific link – [www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/WA\\_login.action](https://www.secureballotusa.com/diaspora/WA_login.action)
- Completed ballots must be returned by mail.

### West Virginia

- Accessible through FVAP.gov, West Virginia offers a state system to 8 counties which allows ballot delivery to the voter and return of the voted ballot to the election official online
- 8 counties: Jackson, Kanawha, Marshall, Mason, Monongalia, Monroe, Putnam, Wood
- state-specific link - <http://www.sos.wv.gov/elections/voter-information-center/Pages/WVUninformedServicesandOverseasCitizensOnlineVoting-PilotProject.aspx>
- Accessible through FVAP.gov, 45 counties are participating, the state-specific link - <https://move.liveballot.com/uocava/default.aspx>
- Voters are allowed to return the voted ballot via mail, email, and fax

## American Language Center Test Dates

<i>Test</i>	<i>August 2010</i>	<i>Septem- ber 2010</i>	<i>October 2010</i>	<i>November 2010</i>	<i>December 2010</i>
<b>ITP</b>	Monday, August 9 Thursday, August 26	Monday, September 13 Thursday, September 30	Thursday, October 14 Thursday, October 28	Wednesday, No- vember 10 Tuesday, November 23	Thursday, December 9 Tuesday, December 28
<b>GRE</b>	N/A	N/A	Subject Test Saturday, October 9  General Test Saturday, October 23	Subject Test Saturday, November 13  General Test Saturday, November 20	N/A
<b>SAT</b>	N/A	N/A	Saturday, October 9	Saturday, November 6	Saturday, December 4
<b>TOEFL</b>	Saturday, August 14	N/A	Saturday, October 16	Saturday, November 13	N/A
<b>TSE</b>	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered
<b>TOEIC</b>	Wednesday, Au- gust 25	Wednesday, Sep- tember 29	Wednesday, Octo- ber 27	Wednesday, No- vember 24	Wednesday, December 29



## Tax guidelines for citizens filing overseas

*From the IRS*

If you are a U.S. citizen or resident alien living or traveling outside the United States, you generally are required to file income tax returns, estate tax returns, and gift tax returns and pay estimated tax in the same way as those residing in the United States. Your income, filing status, and age generally determine whether you must file a return. Generally, you must file a return if your gross income from worldwide sources is at least the amount shown for your filing status in the Filing Requirements table in [Chapter 1 of Publication 54, Tax Guide for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad](#).

If, at the end of your tax year, you are married and one spouse is a U.S. citizen or a resident alien and the other is a nonresident alien, you can choose to treat the nonresident as a U.S. resident. This includes situations in which one of you is a nonresident alien at the beginning of the tax year, but a resident alien at the end of the year, and the other is a nonresident alien at the end of the year.

- If you make this choice, the following rules apply:
- You and your spouse are treated, for income tax purposes, as residents for all tax years that the choice is in effect
- You must file a joint income tax return for the year you make the choice

- Each spouse must report his or her entire worldwide income on the joint income tax return

If you make this choice, you and your spouse are treated as residents for your entire tax year for the purpose of your federal individual income tax return, and for the purpose of withholding U.S. federal income tax from your wages. However for the purpose of Chapter 3 withholding you may still be treated as a nonresident alien.

Generally, neither you nor your spouse can claim tax treaty benefits as a resident of a foreign country for a tax year for which the choice is in effect and you are both taxed on worldwide income. However, the exception to the saving clause of a particular tax treaty might allow a resident alien to claim a tax treaty benefit on certain specified income. You must file a joint income tax return for the year you make the choice, but you and your spouse can file joint or separate returns in later years.

If your spouse is a nonresident alien and you file a joint or separate return, your spouse must have either a Social Security Number (SSN) or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number

(ITIN). To get an SSN for your spouse, apply at a social security office or US consulate. You must complete Form SS-5. You must also provide original or certified copies of documents to verify your spouse's age, identity, and citizenship. If your spouse is not eligible to get an SSN, he or she can file Form W-7 with the IRS OR with a U.S. Consulate such as the consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Damascus to apply for an ITIN.



## Reducing the risk of problems at the port of entry

The Embassy regularly receives calls from Americans who have arrived in Syria yet are being denied permission to enter. While the U.S. Embassy is unable to intervene with Syrian authorities concerning decisions to deny entry to American citizens, there are steps that Americans can take to help reduce the risk problems at the port of entry.

1. **Get a visa before you arrive.** In the past, it has have been possible to obtain a visa upon arrival in Syria. Syrian authorities have informed us that this practice has stopped. To avoid being denied entry, Americans must have a valid visa from a Syrian embassy before they arrive. If you plan to travel to neighboring countries and reenter Syria, be sure that you have a multiple-entry visa.
2. **Follow the rules that pertain to your visa.** If you engage in work not permitted on a tourist visa, if you are using a tourist visa to maintain a residence in Syria, or if you do not register with Syrian Immigration within 15 days of arrival, you may be denied reentry or renewal.
3. **Be aware of how your actions might be perceived by others.** The reasons for port of entry problems may not always seem clear, but may involve travel or statements made which Syrian authorities consider provocative.

More information about Syrian entry/exit requirements can be found in the State Department's [Country Specific Information for Syria](#)



## American Citizen Services Hours and Contact Information

For appointments, please go to our website at :  
<http://damascus.usembassy.gov/service.html>

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### **UPCOMING HOLIDAY CLOSURES**

October 6, Wednesday	Liberation Day
October 10, Sunday	Columbus Day
October 28, Thursday	Section Closed
November 11, Thursday	Veterans Day
November 16-18, T-Th	Al-Adha Holiday
November 25, Thursday	Thanksgiving Day

“Assisting approximately 4 million Americans who reside overseas and nearly 60 million who travel abroad remains a top priority for the U.S. Government.

Though consular work is punctuated by extraordinary acts to help U.S. citizens during times of crisis or urgent need, it is built upon a foundation of services provided to an American public that increasingly lives, works, and learns in the global community.”

-- Department of State and USAID Strategic Plan.